

Is God Cross? Theologies of the Atonement  
Vancouver School of Theology  
July 9-13, 2-5 pm.  
TH 5/728

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**Purpose:**

Many mainline Christians express discomfort with the doctrine of the atonement. Yet for the New Testament Christ's saving work is central to our identity as Christians. What do we do with it then? Ignore it? Redo it? Creatively retrieve fragments from the tradition and reimplement them in preaching and worship in new ways? Or respond more forcefully to critiques of atonement that seem not to have taken its biblical and theological merits into account?

This course will attend to the doctrine of the atonement for the sake of the worship and practice of the church. We will use Fleming Rutledge's magisterial *Crucifixion* alongside articles by Leanne Van Dyke, William Placher, Miroslav Volf and others. We will attend to feminist challenges of the atonement, to those anxious about the violence it seems implicitly at least to endorse, and the inarticulateness that results from two generations of neglect in the church. By the end we hope that you can preach, teach, design worship, and pray the atonement with some degree of confidence.

**Expectations and Course Competence Objectives:**

Students will:

1. identify and discuss a range of understandings and developments in atonement theology in the Bible;
2. wrestle with the historic theological discussion around atonement and sacrifice through interaction with selected classic and modern thinkers; and
3. develop a theology of the cross as it bears on Christian living, both individual and corporate.

**Required Texts and Prereading:**

**(Please arrive with all these texts read if you are taking the course for credit. You will need to buy the Rutledge book. The rest will be available as pdfs when you register for the course)**

William Placher *Jesus the Savior* (Louisville: Westminster, 2001), 109-156.

Fleming Rutledge, *Crucifixion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 1-204.

Leanne Van Dyk, "Toward a New Typology of Reformed Doctrines of Atonement," *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*, ed. Willis & Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 225-238.

Miroslav Volf *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 13-31.

### **Assignment:**

1. Reading and class participation: All students including auditors are expected to do all the required reading and participate in class discussions. 100% attendance is required of Certificate and Degree students.

2. Certificate students: Certificate students are required to hand in 5-6 pages of writing that demonstrates the ability to thoughtfully engage the material and reading for the class and gives a personal reflection on the reading and material covered. You should reflect on the required reading, one of the, of your choice.

3. Basic Degree students (Diploma, MA and M.Div.): are required to submit a written assignment totaling approximately 1500-1875 words/6-8 pages (Th.M. students need to write 3750-4250 words/15-17 pages). Both basic and advanced degree students may submit either a sermon on the atonement (two sermons for Th.M. students) or write a paper that tracks the arguments around penal substitutionary atonement theory? What are the challenges? (e.g., (its inherent violence and implications for gift-giving). What are some of the responses? What is your sense of the state of the discussion? What difference does it make to the Christian life?

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